AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS[1]

1. (Currently Amended) A conversation support system for supporting a plurality of users in having a virtual conversation in a shared virtual space built and provided on a computer network, comprising:

enrolling means for enrolling an avatar of a ~~log-in~~ logged-in user into said shared virtual space;

imparting means for imparting a virtual mobile telephone to each avatar in said shared virtual space, said virtual mobile telephone being usable within said shared virtual space ~~therein~~;

determination means for determining, in response to a call ~~from said~~ to a virtual mobile telephone, whether a calling party who originated said call exists in said shared virtual space; and

connecting means for executing connection processing in accordance with ~~a decision~~ the determination made by said determination means.

2. (Currently Amended) The conversation support system according to claim 1, wherein, if said calling party originated said call from a telephone in the real world, said connecting means establishes a connection with said calling party through a public telephone network in the real world ~~and/or~~ or executes message transfer.

3. (Currently Amended) The conversation support system according to claim 1, wherein, if said calling party originated said call from a telephone in another virtual space,

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[1] This listing of claims will replace all prior versions and listings of claims in the application.

said connecting means establishes a connection with said telephone in said another virtual

space and/or or executes message transfer.

4. (Currently Amended) The conversation support system according to claim 1,

wherein said connecting means receives said call from said a telephone in the real world

and/or or said a virtual telephone in another virtual space and connects the received call to a

virtual mobile telephone of a called avatar in said shared virtual space.

5. (Currently Amended) A conversation support system for supporting a plurality of

users in having a virtual conversation in a shared virtual space built and provided on a

computer network, comprising:

enrolling means for enrolling an avatar of a log-in logged-in user into said shared

virtual space;

imparting means for imparting a virtual public telephone usable by any enrolled

avatar to said shared virtual space at a predetermined place;

determination means for determining, in response to a call from to said virtual public

telephone, whether a calling party who originated said call exists in said shared virtual space;

and

connecting means for executing connection processing in accordance with a decision

the determination made by said determination means.

6. (Currently Amended) The conversation support system according to claim 5,

wherein, if said calling party originated said call from a telephone in the real world, said

connecting means establishes a connection with said calling party through a public telephone

network in the real world and/or or executes message transfer.

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7. (Currently Amended) The conversation support system according to claim 5, wherein, if said caller originated said call from a telephone in another virtual space, said connecting means establishes a connection with said telephone in said another virtual space and/or or executes message transfer.

8. (Currently Amended) A conversation support method for supporting a plurality of users in having a virtual conversation in a shared virtual space built and provided on a computer network, comprising the steps of:

enrolling an avatar of a log-in logged-in user into said shared virtual space;

imparting a virtual mobile telephone to each avatar in said shared virtual space, said virtual mobile telephone being usable within said shared virtual space therein;

determining, in response to a call to a from said virtual mobile telephone, whether a calling party who originated said call exists in said shared virtual space; and

executing connection processing in accordance with the determination a decision made in said determination step.

9. (Currently Amended) The conversation support method according to claim 8, wherein, if said calling party originated said call from a telephone in the real world, said connecting step establishes a connection with said calling party through a public telephone network in the real world and/or or executes message transfer.

10. (Currently Amended) The conversation support method according to claim 8, wherein, if said calling party originated said call from a telephone in another virtual space,

said connecting step establishes a connection with said telephone in said another virtual space and/or or executes message transfer.

11. (Currently Amended) The conversation support method according to claim 8, further comprising the steps of:

receiving a call from a telephone in the real world and/or or a telephone in another virtual space;

determining whether said call is directed to an avatar existing in said shared virtual space; and

if said determining step determines that said call is directed to said avatar existing in said shared virtual space a decision made in the determination step is affirmative, connecting said call to a virtual telephone of said avatar.

12. (Currently Amended) A conversation support method for supporting a plurality of users in having a virtual conversation in a shared virtual space built and provided on a computer network, comprising the steps of:

enrolling an avatar of a log-in logged-in user into said shared virtual space;

imparting a virtual public telephone usable by any enrolled avatar to said shared virtual space at a predetermined place;

determining, in response to a call from to said virtual public telephone, whether a calling party who originated said call exists in said shared virtual space; and

executing connection processing in accordance with a decision the determination made in said determination step.

13. (Currently Amended) The conversation support method according to claim 12, wherein, if said calling party originated said call from a telephone in the real world, said connecting step establishes a connection with said calling party through a public telephone network in the real world ~~and/or~~ or executes message transfer.

14. (Currently Amended) The conversation support method according to claim 8, wherein, if said calling party originated said call from a telephone in another virtual space, said connecting step establishes a connection with said telephone in said another virtual space ~~and/or~~ or executes message transfer.

15. (Currently Amended) A conversation support method for supporting an activity of an avatar in a shared virtual space built and provided on a computer network, comprising ~~the steps of~~:

receiving a request for sending a message from said avatar;

determining whether a destination of said message exists in the real world ~~said shared virtual space~~; and

executing connection processing in accordance with ~~a decision~~ the determination made by the determining step.

16. (Currently Amended) The conversation support method according to claim 15, wherein, if said destination of said message is found in the real world, said ~~connecting~~ step of executing connection processing establishes a connection with said destination through a public telephone network in the real world ~~and/or~~ or executes message transfer.

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17. (Currently Amended) A conversation support method for supporting an activity of an avatar in a shared virtual space built and provided on a computer network, comprising ~~the steps of~~:

receiving a request for sending a message from a <u>telephone</u> ~~source~~ in <u>the</u> real ~~space~~ <u>world</u> through a public telephone network in <u>the</u> real world;

determining whether a destination of said message exists in said shared virtual space; and

if <u>said determining step determines that the destination of said messages exists in said shared virtual space</u> ~~a decision made by the determining step is affirmative~~, sending said message to said avatar.

18. (Currently Amended) A program storage medium storing a computer program in a computer<u>-</u>readable form for executing processing on a computer system ~~for supporting~~ <u>to support</u> a virtual conversation in which a plurality of users can participate in a shared virtual space built and provided on a computer network, said computer program comprising the steps of:

enrolling an avatar of a ~~log-in~~ <u>logged-in</u> user into said shared virtual space;

imparting a virtual public telephone usable by any enrolled avatar to said shared virtual space at a predetermined place;

~~for~~ determining, in response to a call ~~from~~ <u>to</u> said virtual public telephone, whether a calling party who originated said call exists in said shared virtual space; and

executing connection processing in accordance with ~~a decision~~ <u>the determination</u> made in said determination step.

19. (Cancelled).

20. (Currently Amended) A program storage medium storing a computer program in a computer readable form for executing processing on a computer system ~~for supporting~~ to support a virtual conversation in which a plurality of users can participate in a shared virtual space built and provided on a computer network, said computer program comprising the steps of:

receiving a request for sending a message from said avatar;

determining whether a destination of said message exists in the real world ~~said shared virtual space~~; and

executing connection processing in accordance with ~~a decision~~ the determination made in the determining step.

21. (Currently Amended) A program storage medium storing a computer program in a computer readable form for executing processing on a computer system ~~for supporting~~ to support a virtual conversation in which a plurality of users can participate in a shared virtual space built and provided on a computer network, said computer program comprising the steps of:

receiving a request for sending a message from a telephone ~~source~~ in the real ~~space~~ world through a public telephone network in the real world;

determining whether a destination of said message exists in said shared virtual space; and

if said determining step determines that the destination of said message exists in said shared virtual space ~~a decision made in the determining step is affirmative~~, sending said message to ~~said~~ an avatar.